

Mexico's "National Church"

Birth-Control and Physicians
The Pope's New Plea for 'Peace
The Sin of Spiritism
The Optimist

The Catholic Mind

SEMI-MONTHLY

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THE AMERICA PRESS, 59 EAST 83D STREET, NEW YORK.

Mexico's "National Church"

IGNACIO VALDESPINO, BY THE GRACE OF GOD AND FAVOR
OF THE HOLY APOSTOLIC SEE, BISHOP OF AGUASCALI-
ENTES, TO OUR VICAR GENERAL, THE CLERGY, SECULAR
AND REGULAR, AND LAITY OF OUR DIOCESE, HEALTH
AND BENEDICTION IN THE LORD.

Dearly Beloved Brethren:

A CERTAIN rumor, which at the beginning appeared to us as one of those numerous ephemeral reports that are heard in the morning but forgotten in the evening, has finally made an impression upon us; by its revolting meanness and persistent circulation, it has attracted attention and caused considerable uneasiness: we refer to the rumor concerning the separation of the Catholic Church in Mexico from its Head, the Roman Pontiff, and the foundation of a National Church.

We have bounden duties to perform in your regard, Dearly Beloved Brethren: one of our most important obligations is to safeguard you from poisonous pastures and to lead you to fields where the Supreme Pastor points out to you the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Consequently, as soon as we perceive the intrusion of the wolf in sheep's clothing into our fold, we hasten to sound the alarm, fearing that the enemy, profiting by the exile inflicted upon us by circumstances beyond our control and sufficiently known to you, might the more easily surprise you.

There can be no separation in a society as long as its leaders remain closely united and express no desire to be

separated. This principle is taught by reason and is readily understood; it is applicable to civil, commercial and academic corporations, as well as to religious bodies. Now, the leaders of the Catholic Church have been, are, and ever will be the Bishops united to the Supreme Head of the Church, founded by the Divine Redeemer in these words most clear and precise: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."—"Feed my lambs, feed my sheep."—"Whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven."—"Going, therefore, teach ye all nations; he that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me."—"And behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world."

Founded upon such a solid base and in such a solemn manner, the Church, during twenty centuries, has battled victoriously against the despotism of civil authority, and the sophistry of false science and of Utopian philosophy. It is almost incredible that a schism could begin in our unfortunate country, the victim of so many severe ordeals. The realization of this schism would divide more and more those forces which our fatherland so greatly needs. As Mexico is exhausted by political factions and disastrous civil strife, she would inevitably consummate her ruin by new dissensions.

The Roman, Catholic, Apostolic Church, the only true Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Redeemer and Saviour of the world, is the same Church that existed in the Catacombs, and, after three centuries of cruel persecution, thrived in the days of Constantine. It is she who overcame the apostate Julian, and the heresiarch Arius. It is she who, unscathed and unsullied, triumphed over.

the revolt of Luther, and the Voltairianism and philosophy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Do not believe that, at the present time, the attacks, inspired by the hatred of Satan against the Immaculate Spouse of Christ, the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world, will be less furious; accustomed to their repetition, we should know how to combat them most effectively. To avoid all confusion in the moments of assault, the voice of the chief must be heard; this is precisely what we have in view in addressing you this paternal exhortation, thus proving the deep interest we take in your welfare.

You should know that we, your spiritual chiefs, are united with our Head, the Roman Pontiff, the legitimate successor of Peter, the Vicegerent of Jesus Christ, and that, despite the great sufferings inflicted upon us, the vile calumnies uttered against us, and the bitterness of our exile, we, the Mexican Bishops, all without exception, have remained firm in our Faith and true to the solemn oaths we took on the day of our episcopal consecration. We confess, believe, and teach that "Where Peter is, there is the Church"; *Ubi Petrus, ibi Ecclesia*. Moreover, we condemn any doctrine opposed to this truly Catholic principle.

You must bear well in mind that your pastors should hold a rightful succession, for, all the branches of that venerable tree, twenty centuries old, adhere to the trunk and are nourished by the same sap. A branch separated from this tree may show signs of freshness and vigor, but these appearances are deceptive; such a branch is naturally weak and doomed to destruction. This is the reason why Protestantism is divided into countless sects, all of which are subject to human caprice; man, refusing

to acknowledge the Divine Supremacy, dares to invent, according to his whims a deity, and to submit to his own free examination the word of the true God.

Thus are formed those new organizations called churches, which have no unity of doctrine, no lawful succession of pastors, no head, no judge to pronounce sentence, no true bishops to rule and to govern.

We have already remarked that, as long as the chief members of a society do not consent to its dissolution, that society still possesses real union. Thanks be to God, there is not in Mexico a single pastor who, charged with a flock, has led it from the Way, the Truth, and the Life, that is to say, from Peter, the legitimate representative of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, the rumor concerning disunion, or the founding of a new church by the rightful successors of the Apostles, is an atrocious lie, a diabolical artifice invented to seduce the unwary, to exploit the ignorant, and to satisfy the hatred of those who wish there were no eternal and immutable laws condemning criminals, who assume a false garb in the hope of concealing their villainy.

If, unfortunately, there be any group of brethren unfaithful to the true Church, among whom may be found priests forgetful of their honor and sacerdotal obligations; if, for the greater misfortune of our unhappy country, a schism, as it is rumored, has been started, we exhort you to remain loyal to the Faith of your ancestors, and to turn a deaf ear to those innovators who are the greatest calamity that has yet befallen our fatherland.

You have suffered, or rather, you are still suffering from famine, pestilence, and war, and now feel exhausted and discouraged; in this your moment of trial, can we neglect to warn you against the current of pride, which, under the pretext of national integrity and false patriot-

ism, threatens to drag you to your ruin? You are told that you cannot be both Romans and Mexicans, and vice versa, as if there were question of a national name; it is well known that the qualificative "Roman" refers solely to religion, and does not change, in the least, the all-wise teaching of the Saviour of the world, who says: "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's." You, yourselves, can bear witness to the truth that the Church has never attempted to destroy your nationality, but, on the contrary, she helps and will always help you to foster genuine patriotism. So evident is this fact, that, from the time we were recognized as an independent nation, our bishops have been Mexicans by birth, and if it had not been for our continued fratricidal wars, caused by selfish factions, we should now count cardinals in our hierarchy, this honor is enjoyed by the United States, although the majority of its inhabitants are Protestants, whilst the greatest number of Mexicans are Catholics.

Here nobody believes, nobody thinks that the independence and integrity of the United States of America are endangered, because the millions of Roman Catholics, as true citizens as the President of the Republic, are daily increasing.

Do not believe our accusers who attribute to us the intention of keeping you in ignorance and superstition, and who maintain that, to free yourselves from this dense ignorance, you must shake off the Roman yoke. Our enemies forget that, whilst making these false charges, they are, at this very moment, busy in destroying libraries, closing schools and colleges, ruining masterpieces of art, demolishing physical cabinets, chemical laboratories, museums, and all that represents culture and civilization, simply because these things are the property of

the Catholic clergy. Does not such conduct betray an impious rage, a heartrending forgetfulness, and the blackest ingratitude?

Your fidelity may be put to the test by the artifices used to induce you to join the so-called National Church of Mexico. You know the remedy against such temptations; it is the same as that which Our Lord, Jesus Christ, gave, on a solemn occasion, to His Apostles: *Vigilate et orate, ut non intretis in tentationem*: "Watch ye and pray that ye enter not into temptation."

Rectors of parishes and priests, our dearly beloved colaborers, you must be the advanced sentinels, always vigilant, always distrustful of your own weakness, never negligent in those duties which require the utmost care and solicitude. Let nothing terrify you when there is question of your vocation. God has chosen you to be the salt of the earth; never forget those sacred words you uttered when you embraced the ministry of the Lord: *Dominus pars hæreditatis meæ, tu es qui restitues hæreditatem meam mihi*. Watch and pray and teach the Faithful by your example; be for them a model well worthy of their imitation; daily convince yourselves more and more that without vigilance and prayer it is impossible to resist temptation.

We forbid our priests to enter into disputation or to engage in theological controversy with our opponents; we command them to explain clearly the Catholic doctrine, to omit personal allusions, carefully to avoid all public, direct or indirect, remarks referring to any political party.

We recommend to our dearly beloved diocesans to rid themselves of this horrible new plague that menaces them, and to be much more solicitous for the health of the soul than that of the body, for their eternal happiness

depends upon the care and attention they give to their soul.

Do not lose courage because Our Lord delays in granting your requests. We must not forget at what great distance we have placed ourselves from Him, by our transgressions of His holy law, and by our insensibility to the promptings of His grace. Let us seriously examine our conscience how we employ our time, how we fulfil our public duties, and we shall undoubtedly notice many imperfections in our conduct. Let us render ourselves worthy of the mercy of God, who is never invoked in vain by anyone whose soul is enlightened by faith and whose heart is free from sin. Therefore, repel the seductive efforts that are made to rob you of the most rich and precious treasure you have received from your forefathers: the Roman, Catholic, Apostolic Faith. Ask unceasingly Our Queen and Mother, the most holy Virgin of Guadalupe, to help you to keep that treasure. Rest assured that she will aid you to preserve your faith intact until the hour of your death.

As a token of our paternal affection, and in gratitude for your prayers in our behalf, from our sad exile we send you our pastoral benediction, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

We ordain that this our pastoral letter be read, after the Gospel, at all Masses, and in all the churches and public chapels of our diocese, on the first Sunday after its reception.

Given at the chaplain's residence of the Incarnate Word Convent, San Antonio, Texas, December 4, 1916.

✠ IGNACIO VALDESPINO,
Bishop of Aguascalientes.

*By order of the Rt. Rev. Bishop JUAN NAVARRETTE,
Sec. ad interim.*

Birth-Control and Physicians*

The Report of the Majority Committee of the Medical Society of the County of New York presented at a meeting held December 26, 1916. The Committee Refused to recommend the endorsement of an Amendment to the Penal Code which read: "Nothing in this Statute shall be so construed as to prohibit any duly licensed physician from prescribing for his patients the methods for preventing conception."

THIS report was read by the secretary of the committee, Dr. George W. Kosmak, who stated that in accordance with a resolution passed at the October meeting of the County Medical Society, the committee appointed by the president to present a memorial on the medical aspects of birth-control had held several meetings as the result of which it had developed that there was a diversity of opinion among its members regarding the action to be taken later in this matter. The vote taken on December 8, eight members of the committee being present, showed that five members were opposed and two in favor of a change in the State Penal Code, the chairman not voting. As a member of the majority the undersigned desired to subscribe to the following statement as an expression of the attitude taken. It was the understanding that the committee was primarily ap-

*Not everything in the following report is ethically sound. For the most part, however, the physicians' opinions are those that Catholics hold. The article appeared originally in the *Medical Record*.—Ed. CATHOLIC MIND.

pointed to discuss the propriety of amending Section 1142 of the Penal Law, State of New York, in such a manner as to permit giving advice by regularly qualified medical practitioners to married people on how to avoid conception.

The undersigned member of the committee firmly believed that any such action on the part of the organized medical profession would be most inappropriate and uncalled for at any time, and particularly so at the present moment when a senseless and sensational propaganda relative to this important matter was being circulated by very doubtful methods. Although the committee had been instructed to present a memorial on the medical aspects of birth-control to the members of the society, they felt the subject to be too important and far reaching to be decided in one way or another through the medium of such a brief and necessarily superficial study. The social, moral, economic, and finally medical questions involved were of such gravity that the organized medical profession as represented in the County Society was not qualified to pass upon them at the present time with the knowledge at hand. They claimed that no satisfactory evidence had been adduced by the propagandists who favored regulating the control of births to show any necessity for giving recognition by law to methods of contraception.

A movement of this kind would undoubtedly have a most unfortunate effect on the minds of the public in general, and they did not believe that small families, especially among the poorer classes, would bring about, as claimed, a solution of the economic and social problems of the day. The creation of a family could not be governed by legal procedures, no matter how well inten-

tioned. This was a question which must be left entirely to the judgment and decision of the two individuals who had made a marriage contract. The only restriction which could possibly be considered by the State would be that referring to a procreative union between individuals afflicted with mental or physical disease, and that was apparently not the question in this case. The statistics brought forward in favor of legal regulation of the matter of birth-control which were derived from foreign sources had no application in this country, nor were they of a conclusive argument. . . .

Many of the foreign procedures which had been copied and promulgated by those who had attempted the movement in this country could only be characterized as absurd, frequently dangerous, filthy, and usually unsatisfactory. If indiscriminately employed, as they undoubtedly would be, if any change was made in the law, they would result in untold harm to the community. Moreover, at the present time we were being treated to the unique spectacle on the one hand of an agitation by a certain group of reformers to limit the number of children, and on the other the reports of governmental commissions appointed to consider, and if possible to recommend, a method of relief from a declining birth-rate. The most conspicuous example of the latter was that of France, the accepted traditional home of the "contraceptionists," whose methods had been largely copied elsewhere.

Amending the Penal Code in the manner intended would also, among other things, unquestionably afford an opportunity for the more widespread practice of the professional abortionists, who had already for many years posed as experts in methods of preventing conception and would consider an opportunity for the further

practice and development of their specialty that would not long be neglected. Notwithstanding the argument that the prevention of conception and unlawful abortion should not be considered in the same class, they were practically so as regards the professional abortionist. With the law as it stood prosecution of these pests was possible, otherwise it would be surrounded with many difficulties. The medical profession should give its undivided aid and support to every legal measure that would tend to lessen the practice of these individuals and also the means by which they could be prosecuted and brought to justice. It seemed hardly reasonable that the organized medical profession should by such measures as those contemplated ally itself with illegal practitioners and with the sensation-mongers among the laity and clergy who had taken this matter up in the rôle of social, economic reformers. The prevention of conception for good and sufficient reasons could now be carried out even with the law as it stood, for the knowledge of such service and advice by physicians honestly given would certainly never come before a judge or jury for trial, and if by any chance it did, a conviction would not be obtained.

It would appear reasonable to assume that certain medical questions involving the relations between physician and patient, in which common sense dictated the course to be taken, might, with advantage, be kept without the pale of fixed statute-book laws. The topic under discussion was not a question of State medicine and the medical profession ought not to take the lead in a movement of this kind with which its alliance would be of very doubtful value either to the community at large or to its own members. Education in the broad sense could and would contribute more to the solution of this prob-

lem, as of others, than ill-advised legislative enactments and sensational propagandist movements. It was in the development of such educational measures that the medical profession would find its greatest field of usefulness. No attempt should be made to arrive at the end sought by doubtful, although rapid, means that might in the course of time redound to the discredit of their supporters, be these societies or individuals. For these reasons they, as the majority of the committee, believed that the County Medical Society should decline to take part in the repeal of a statute which served a useful purpose and constituted an important protective measure for the community at large.

This report was signed by Drs. C. E. Nammack, H. C. Taylor, W. H. Bishop, M. C. O'Brien, Frank Van Fleet and G. W. Kosmak.

(After the Minority Report was presented, a discussion ensued, during which the following remarks were made:)

Dr. John H. Claiborne said that according to the printed notice received by him and, he presumed, by all the members of the County Medical Society, a Committee of one thousand respectfully urged him to be present at this meeting to indorse a conservative and dignified amendment of Section 1142 of the Penal Code, State of New York. The proposed amendment read as follows: "Nothing in this statute shall be so construed as to prohibit any duly licensed physician from prescribing for his patients the methods of preventing conception." This amendment, he had been informed, had been indorsed by more than 1,000 citizens, and among them were cited the names of six physicians, presumably of this Society, men of recognized position and distinction in their profession. Contained in this notice was a

printed slip stating, "I am in favor of amending Section 1142 of the Penal Code, State of New York, to permit duly licensed physicians to prescribe for their patients methods of preventing conception." Below this was a blank space for the name and address of the member to whom it was addressed for his signature. From this method of arrangement he said he would conclude that it was expected of the member that he sign his name in acquiescence of this proposed amendment.

As a member of this Society he not only declined to sign it, but he protested against it with all the vigor with which he was capable, as a man who loved his country and his civic duty, as a humanitarian and respecter of the laws of God and man. He did not for a moment doubt but that those who had signed this request were sincere in their convictions. He did not doubt any less that those convictions were based upon mistaken premises and disregard of the principles he had referred to. It was useless to go into this discussion deeply, but in a general way he based his objection to it on the ground first that no man had a right to control the laws of nature in the matter of reproduction. The prevention of human life he conceived to be a crime second only to the destruction of it. For such an amendment, therefore, it was impossible for him to vote, and he not only declined to do so, but protested against this amendment with all his vigor.

Dr. Frank Van Fleet said he wished to enter a protest against the charges which had been brought against the medical profession and members of this Society, namely, that there were members within the ranks of the Society who performed criminal abortions. If any man made such a charge he was in honor bound either to present

the names of the offenders or to make an apology. It seemed that it was only for the poor that birth-control was needed, but it must be remembered that it was from the poor that many of our best citizens came. If in that old cabin in Kentucky, where the direst poverty dwelt, Nancy Hanks had been furnished with the knowledge that it was now proposed to disseminate, and had seen fit to use it, Abraham Lincoln would never have been born and the history of the United States would have been different from what it was. "There is a destiny that shapes our ends, rough hew them as we will." We might with safety interfere with the laws that governed plants and animals, but when they interfered with human beings "God worked in a mysterious manner His wonders to perform." There were higher forces at work than we were able to understand and it was most unwise for this County Medical Society to enter into such a scheme as this. If any of those present were in favor of birth-control they could advocate their ideas as citizens, but the County Medical Society was no place to bring such an idea. It was to be hoped that the vote of the Society would be overwhelmingly in favor of the majority report.

Dr. M. C. O'Brien made a strong plea in support of the majority report. He said that they heard from the other side that morals were relative, that what was good fifty years ago was not good now. There was only one kind of morals and that was good morals, and good morals were in accord with natural law. The argument was advanced that in the use of preventive measures there was no child and one could not harm a thing that was non-existent, what was non-existent could not be destroyed. This was a specious argument if looked at in

the light of preventive medicine. We vaccinated that smallpox might be non-existent. Gorgas poured oil on the swamps of Panama that malaria might be non-existent, and we quarantined against bubonic plague that it might be non-existent. If we did not have children we would have no State, and the State stood for what was good and moral and all had the benefit of its protection. We looked tonight on the pictures of Valentine Mott and James Wood and other great men in the profession of medicine who had served humanity, and he could but ask where they would be if their parents had used contraceptive methods. We arrested the prostitute not because she spread venereal disease, but because she was an enemy to the State and these neo-malthusians were enemies to the State. He hoped on behalf of good morals, good citizenship, and the rights of the unborn children the amendment that had been suggested would be defeated.

The Pope's New Plea for Peace

The Holy Father's Acknowledgment of the Cardinals' Christmas Greetings.

ONCE again—it is the third time in the troubled course of Our Supreme Ministry—the pleasant custom of the Christmas festival affords Us the opportunity of observing how closely the Sacred College is united to Our person. We recognize a proof of that union in the comforting sympathy which the Cardinals of this Roman Church, always the mother of the friendless, always the helper of the sad, have been good enough to express for Our humble work, designed to mitigate,

until such time as peace is restored, the evils of the war. Praise be for this to Our Lord Jesus Christ, who, shielding with His person the members of the sufferers, inspires, accepts, and gives strength to works of charity. But a still clearer proof of this attachment is supplied by the identity of thought and aspiration which, as stated by the venerable Dean of the Sacred College, to whose words his long experience and his alert intelligence give special value, exists between the members of that body and the Head of the Church.

A harmonious echo of the unanimous choir of the angels, whose clear notes cease not to sound powerfully even amidst the crash of arms and the explosions of hatred, your voice, my Lord Cardinal, has repeated the exact good wishes of Jesus and of the festival of His Nativity—good wishes *for the pacification of men*; and you did not forget, as if for the elucidation of the, so far, unheard prayer, to utter ardent hopes that, in the pursuit of peace, Our constant aim, there should not be wanting on the part of anyone that condition which also accompanied its announcement in the cave of Bethlehem—peace to men *of good will*. How acceptable to Us is this wish and how timely seems to Us the warning that accompanies it We shall not grow tired of repeating.

We have mentioned in several documents of Our Pontificate the necessary condition of good will, and in the same way as Our first predecessor [II Peter, i.13] We deem it Our duty to awaken the recollection of it by Our admonitions addressed to all Our children without distinction, *Iustum arbitror . . . suscitare vos in commotione*. And how, in fact, could Our sons hope with Us for peace, for that just and lasting peace which should put an end to the horrors of the present war, if

it has not been possible to obtain any conditional good without the observance of the condition, and the *pax hominibus bonæ voluntatis* is today a conditional promise, neither more nor less than when it sounded for the first time over the cradle of the new-born Redeemer?

Many and many a time in the fearful course of the horrible hurricane which affects such a large part of the world, reading the petitions of mothers, wives, fathers, and children, and measuring in thought and feeling the social and domestic ruin caused by the immense cataclysm, have We gone over again the scene of the shedding of tears by Jesus at the sight of Jerusalem, sinful, unbelieving, wanton. But more than the tears, of themselves so eloquent, have the sorrowful words of the Redeemer alarmed Us: *Quia si cognovisses et tu . . . quæ ad pacem tibi, nunc autem abscondita sunt oculis tuis . . . eo quod non cognoveris tempus visitationis tuæ*. Oh, let the earth know now, amidst the angelic harmony and the sweet enticement of the Babe of Peace—let the earth know now *quæ ad pacem sibi*; let the powerful aid the voice of this exalted Senate to put a stop to the destruction of the people; let the nations reflect that the Church, by the light of the faith and through the assistance of Him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, sees, aye, intuitively perceives much farther than the weak human eye; let the belligerents at last yield to the repeated remonstrances and prayers of the Father of the Christian Family, and let them prepare by the ways of justice for the advent and the embrace of peace, so that a fresh illustration may be given in our days of the words of the ancient Psalmist, *Iustitia et pax osculate sunt*. [Ps lxxxiv].

The expiatory sufferings of the good and the holy

appeals of Our beloved sons, first of all, of the members of the Sacred College, encourage Us to hope that the fulfilment of Our wish is no longer distant. And We, sure of the Church's destinies, to which the omnipotent hand of God will never be wanting either in unpleasant or joyful vicissitudes, look with confidence also to the future of the States, which God, in His mercy, has not made incurable. We look confidently to you likewise, My Lords of the Sacred College, and to all of whom you are the worthy crown, participators all, to various degrees, in the exercise of that charity which has always been the happy heritage, and now especially is the noblest work of the Church of Rome. If to you, as affectionate sons, it is a pleasure to comfort Us with the prayer of the Church, *Dominus conservet eum, vivicet eum*, it is a pleasure to Us in turn to pray the Heavenly Father that *quos dedit mihi non perdam ex eis quemquam*, and, on the other hand, it is a pleasure to beseech Him that, derived from the cradle of Jesus, *pax Dei, quæ exsuperat omnem sensum, custodiat corda vestra et intelligentias vestras* [Philipp. iv:7]; finally, it is a pleasure to comfort you with that pledge of paternal love which, in the difficulties of life, strengthens the heart of sons, and which We give you in cordially imparting to you the Apostolic Benediction.

The Sin of Spiritism

Reprinted from the "Month"

ONE lamentable result of the war on a faithless generation has been the spread of superstition, and especially of that noxious form of superstition known as Spiritism. People recently bereaved have a natural longing to regain communication with those they have lost, and fall a ready prey, unless they are practical Christians, to the mediums who offer them that solace. No Church except the Catholic has any definite or consistent doctrine on the subject of dealing with the dead. She condemns the attempt as an unlawful endeavor to escape from the conditions of our probation, and as, at any rate, risking intercourse with evil spirits, God's enemies. She maintains that the old prohibition in Deuteronomy (xviii: 10-11) "Neither let there be found among you anyone . . . that consulteth soothsayers, or observeth dreams and omens: neither let there be any wizard, nor charmer, nor anyone that consulteth pythonic spirits or fortune-tellers, or that *seeketh the truth from the dead*" (R. V. "or a necromancer")—is still in full force, for these practices are sins against the First Commandment. She unhesitatingly proclaims that spiritistic phenomena properly so called (not *i. e.*, thought-reading or hypnotic displays) are due either to fraud or to the action of evil spirits, whether devils or lost souls. There is no room in her dogmatic system for disembodied spirits which have not finished their probation and are still free to exercise liberty such as they had on earth. She teaches indeed that inhabitants of the spiritual world may hold communication with mortals, but only as God's

agents or by God's permission. She upholds the Communion of Saints and encourages us to pray for, and in certain circumstances to, the Faithful Departed. The evil spirits that speak through mediums are allowed to do so in order to punish by deceiving those who disobey them and rebel against the conditions of their probation. No instructed Catholic can dabble in spiritism without what is, objectively, grievous sin.

Outside the Church this practice is painfully widespread, and the war, as we have said, has given it greater vogue. The law against the impostors who pose as fortune-tellers should surely be extended to the impostors who practice as mediums for hire. For they can give no real guarantee that they can do what they are paid to do. No satisfactory or scientific test of identity has ever yet been applied which would convince a prudent man that the "intelligence" was what it professed to be. No spirit-utterance has been recorded which transcends the cultural level of the medium employed. The advocates of this sinful practice claim that it establishes scientifically the fact of survival after death; it has been foolishly hailed as a "new revelation," whereas the fact of immortality is a logical deduction of reason from the "simplicity" of the animating principle in man. And what fact is more clearly proclaimed in the old revelation of Jesus Christ than the reunion of body and soul in the Resurrection? It argues a sad lack of faith, not to say a defect of reason, when men turn for consolation from the infallible utterances of Christ and His Apostles to the vulgar oracles of professional mediums, people generally of little education or character. And it is a fitting nemesis that those, who are too superior to yield the obedience of faith to God's revelation, should be ex-

ploited by any illiterate charlatan who has the cunning to guess their desires and purposes.

The truth is that science without religion is always prone to prejudice and superstition. There is no greater *a priori* dogmatist than your scientific rationalist. The Christian at any rate has always the *præambula fidei*, considerations which lead up to the act of faith and show it to be a prudent and a rational step. But the faith of the out-and-out Darwinian is built upon air. It has neither intrinsic probability nor extrinsic support. Professedly based upon rigid facts it is a series of assumptions. The pathetic eagerness with which the materialist jumps at every new discovery of the "missing link," and the disingenuousness with which often he molds the scanty fragments to his heart's desire, shows how at heart he feels the illogicality of his position. And yet by dint of reiterated assertion and by the alluring prospect of getting rid of a Creator—and a Judge, he succeeds in convincing the unthinking that life "developed" from non-living matter and reason from what was irrational. And thus a London *Times* reviewer sits open-mouthed at the feet of a Professor who, by a series of perfectly gratuitous conjectures, starting from the *possibility* "that the primate stock took its origin from Therapsid reptilian ancestors which *had become* bipedal and *perhaps arboreal*," satisfies himself that our remote progenitors learnt to walk among the forest-branches before it ventured on to the ground. By simply enumerating the advantages which our present anatomical structure confers upon us, our Professor infers their evolution from less advantageous conditions, and his faithful disciple, unaware apparently that there is not a single particle of

evidence in the whole of this exposition, calls the *Times* readers' attention to "the convincing argument as to the evolutionary value of the arboreal apprenticeship" of man. Andrew Lang better characterises such literature by his comment in "Magic and Religion": "This sort of reasoning, with its inferring of inferences from other inferences, themselves inferred from conjectures as to the existence of facts of which no proof is adduced must be called superstitious rather than scientific." Yet it goes on pouring from the press, and few are bold enough to exclaim: "The King has got no clothes."

The Optimist

JOHN C. REVILLE, S.J.

LEIBNITZ affirmed that the present world in which we live is the best possible world that God could make. In doing so the great German philosopher imposed a limit to the powers of the Creator. Sound philosophy, on the contrary, teaches that the present world is not the best which God could make. This world however, answers perfectly to the end which the Creator had in view and in spite of its evident shortcomings and defects, it may become an abode of peace and happiness. Evil and sorrow will, it is true, visit man during his sojourn on earth, yet in spite of them, he may rise superior to all the blows and burdens of misfortune and find in his own heart the secret of true happiness.

Two types of man divide humanity, the pessimist and the moderate, well-balanced optimist who rejects the exaggerated optimism of Leibnitz. The pessimist believes that this is the worst world which God could make, that

everything in it is dark, gloomy and doleful; that it is an abode of tears, of misery, of individual, social and national misfortune. To such a man life is a tragedy closed with catastrophe and ruin. The optimist sees in this world the sorrows of mind, heart and soul which afflict humanity. The arrows of misfortune have riven his breast. A man, he feels all that a man can suffer, but he does not let the wound fester. He has a heavenly balm for the hurts and the bruises which no warrior can avoid in the battle of life. Even though unhorsed in the fray, he does not give up the fight, but, with hope in his heart and with hands again steadied for the onset, he once more faces the foe. Failures do not daunt him. The dangers and the perils of the combat do not hold him back. Optimist that he is, he does his best and leaves the rest to Heaven. There is always a silver and a golden lining to the clouds that roll over the field where he is struggling, and through the rift in the gathering storm, he sees the hand of God stretching out to crown him with victory. He is never beaten, for as the poet says, though he may not command success, he deserves it.

Men such as he do great things for God and for man. No great work in Church or State is accomplished without the trust, the hope, the dauntless energy, the buoyant spirit, the daring, the reckless but knightly courage of the optimist. The Apostles were optimists. They sowed in tears and blood. They knew that in God's own time, the golden harvest would come. For 300 years every Pontiff that sat on the throne of Peter was an optimist. Linus and Clement and Eleutherius and Urban knew that the Catacombs would soon be changed into the Basilica of the Lateran, and that the hated Cross would glitter above the Capitol. Columbus was an optimist. He knew in

his heart that the magic voices which beckoned him to the West were not deceiving him, that out of the shadows of the sunset a new world would emerge to gladden his straining eyes. The Catholic Church ever teaches the noblest and the purest optimism, for she is ever sounding in our ears that martial call *Sursum corda*, "Lift up your hearts," to thrill our souls with a message of hope, of courage, of trust and love. The optimist takes a cheerful and bright view of life. If this be so the true Christian and Catholic is the genuine representative of the class. For him, life is God's best and noblest gift. Its blessings and its sorrows come from a father's hand. He spends it for God's service and glory. He cheerfully bears its load of suffering and care. He is not daunted by its misfortunes. He confidently and lovingly awaits its reward.

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